



**With Sevens season upon us this edition of the New Zealand Rugby Players Association Players' Own Magazine has been put together with input from the New Zealand Women's Sevens team.**

# PLAYERS PERSPECTIVE

**I had a stroke on the training field - thank goodness. MICHAEL LAWRENSON**

**IT WAS A NORMAL THURSDAY MORNING IN SEPTEMBER. I WAS TRAINING WITH MY COUNTIES MANUKAU ITM CUP TEAM AND AFTER THE SESSION, I BEGAN FEELING EXTREME NAUSEA AND DIZZINESS. LUCKILY WITH THE MEDICAL STAFF IN CLOSE ATTENDANCE, I COLLAPSED AND AN AMBULANCE WAS CALLED AND I WAS RUSHED TO MIDDLEMORE HOSPITAL.**

AT THE HOSPITAL I SUFFERED VIOLENT NAUSEA AND VOMITING WHILE THE DOCTORS WORKED TO SEE WHAT THE PROBLEM WAS.

Initially the medical staff diagnosed my condition as an extreme case of vertigo, however, an MRI revealed that I had suffered a stroke.

In my case, it was a traumatic right vertebral artery dissection causing a predominantly right cerebellar stroke. When I look back on it, I am lucky to be alive. Had this happened to me half an hour later, I could have been alone or I could have been driving and it could have been fatal.

From the time it happened to the time I was discharged by the hospital stroke team I had lost 13kg. I didn't exactly have that weight to lose and it was mainly muscle which I had worked hard to get. At 6.7ft my stature changed and I now moved with my head down as I felt very vulnerable and unsafe on my feet. What I struggled with, apart from the excessive fatigue and the constant nausea, was the fact you couldn't see that I was sick from the outside. If I had a broken leg, arm or an external injury, people could see why I was acting differently. However, simple tasks became daunting, like trying to stand while showering and making a sandwich. Besides this I looked relatively normal

apart from hanging my head down and looking quite pale.

I had to practise the smallest tasks like learning to make a coffee and walking. I was definitely luckier than other stroke patients as I didn't have to learn to eat and talk again, but I did spend more time sleeping than ever before.

It was very stressful and terrifying, but the support I was given by my team including the medical staff, the New Zealand Rugby Players Association [NZRPA] and the Counties Manukau Rugby Union to date has been unreal.



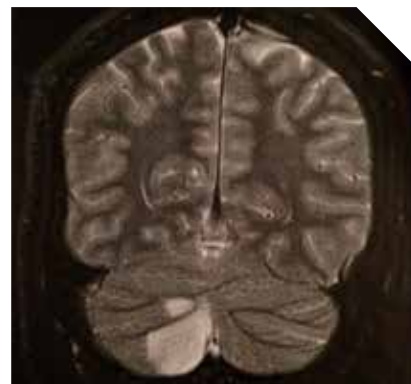
MICHAEL LAWRENSON

My situation is quite unique. I was born in South Africa but living in America and playing rugby in New Zealand. How did I end up playing in New Zealand? I met the Steelers head coach, Tana Umaga, while he was in America attending a seven-a-side tournament in Philadelphia. He was looking for a tall, mobile lock, and offered me a chance to travel to New Zealand to play club rugby, and then progress to ITM Cup. During my time playing club rugby for Karaka in Counties Manukau, my Dad had passed away in South Africa. Sadly, my Mum had also passed with Cancer when I was 12, and so with no parents, the team Doctor got hold of my beautiful fiancée, Alyssa, and kept her informed. She kept my sister and brother in the loop. The NZRPA had arranged for Alyssa to fly out from America and this was crucial to

my recovery. To say I was happy to see her was an understatement! Her arrival in the wee hours of the Monday morning was a highlight in my life changing ordeal. Our team's Personal Development Manager [PDM] Kylie Sousa and the NZRPA staff were on the ball and provided great support. Kylie took charge of the situation and liaised with all the parties involved to keep them informed. She ensured I was getting the best care possible and provided 24hr support to my fiancée and I.

She also checked on me and helped me make plans ensuring my insurance claims were being processed and I was making plans for my recovery.

My Karaka and Steelers rugby family were eager to support me. Once I was released from hospital I moved in with a family who I stayed with when I first arrived in New Zealand. They were just incredible with their love, support and generosity. For that I will be eternally grateful. The NZRPA and the family that I lived with took care of most things for me, which at the time would have been very overwhelming with my condition. Gema Hill from InsureYou was great. She looks after all of the player's insurance policies which are part of their playing



**At the age of 24 "You have had a stroke" was not what I was expecting to hear.**

contracts. She took care of all my insurance needs and dealt with the crisis cover component of my policy. I am fortunate that my stroke was covered under one of the defined serious conditions on the Crisis Cover insurance policy. It wasn't until this moment that I fully appreciated how important insurance was.

I wasn't really up to having many visitors as I was really struggling with the nausea and the whole situation of the limitations that having a stroke had caused.

Recovery was an emotional rollercoaster. I was feeling anxious, vulnerable and afraid of having another stroke, but those around me knew it was important for me to talk about it. I was provided fantastic psychological aid from Dr Stress [Dr. John McEwan] who made home visits for me because I was too ill to make the trips in the car.

Dr. McEwan's experience and expertise gave me a lot of comfort and helped me to understand the emotional and physical process my body was going through. My mental health definitely played a crucial role in getting myself back to normal and Dr. Stress was crucial in that process. My partner had to fly back to America to sit her own college exams and this was challenging but provided me with extra motivation to get well enough to fly back.

**You go through and question 'why did this happen to me and were there any signs that I should have taken note of?'**

I did have a terrible headache on the Monday morning which was our



MATES FAREWELL MICHAEL LAWRENSON

day off, but it went away relatively quickly. I should have mentioned this to our team Doctor but I didn't and my tip to any player is to let your team's medical staff know about anything that is going on, no matter how small it may seem at the time. I also had every players' worst nightmare to deal with. I was facing the fact that I had been advised not to play contact sport again, as it could be life threatening. David Gibson, Player Services Manager from the NZRPA had been through something similar so was able to help me process that and provided useful insight.

With a medical science college degree background, I understood the severity of my situation.

**However, the words "you cannot play rugby again" gave me nightmares.**

There are two things that despite being really difficult I did manage to do before I headed home. I took part in the team photo, [even though I spewed quite a lot afterwards] and attended the team's prize giving. It meant a lot to me to get the chance

to say goodbye to all the brothers. I firmly believe that New Zealand was the best country in the world for this to happen in because the support is incredible and the medical system was outstanding.

I am under no illusions that my recovery is a very, very, long, slow process and it has been a very traumatic journey.

Much to my immense relief I was cleared to fly and Rob Nicol from the NZRPA and some of my Steelers family came to farewell me at the airport.

I returned to America where I will concentrate on my recovery and building a future for my fiancée and I. I have an interest in coaching and was fortunate to have done some coaching qualifications as part of my Personal Development Programme in New Zealand so am keen to pursue that and to continue my studies in the medical profession.

I am expected to make a full recovery and I am extremely grateful for that. However, it just goes to show how important it is to have a life plan outside of rugby. Rugby is your plan B but your life is your plan A.

**OUT & ABOUT**

**NZRPA Personal Development Managers Conference**



**Long Service Awards**

Congratulations to our long service award recipients from the Personal Development Programme Steve Symons Hurricanes/Wellington, Jason McKenzie Southland, Judy Clement Chiefs/Waikato, Peter Sinclair Highlanders/Otago and David Gibson NZRPA



**Josh Blackie** from the International Rugby Players Association [IRPA] addresses the Personal Development Managers from the Provincial Unions and Franchises.



Players getting ready for the **NZRPA AGM**





We asked our players to get into the festive spirit and here's what they came up with.



## PICTURES FROM THE **PLAYERS**



**BRYN HALL, BLUES**



**TALENÍ SEÚ AND MITCH  
KARPIĆ, CHIEFS**



**ZIGGY FISIIHOI AND CALLUM  
RETALICK, BAY OF PLENTY**



**NORTH HARBOUR  
ACADEMY**



**REED PRINSEP AND JACK  
GOODHUE, CANTERBURY**



**ATU MOLI FROM WAIKATO  
SHARES CHRISTMAS CHEER  
WITH REBECCA FOY**



**NZ WOMEN'S SEVENS TEAM IN  
THE FESTIVE SPIRIT ON THEIR  
CULTURAL EVENING ON CAMP**



**JASON MCKENZIE (SOUTHLAND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER), BEN SMITH AND PETER SINCLAIR (HIGHLANDERS AND OTAGO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER)**



**NZ MENS SEVENS TEAM**



**ONOSAI & AMY AUVA'A JAMES AND ELIJAH, COUNTIES MANUKAU**



**SIONE LEA & FAMILY, TARANAKI**

**FESTIVE SEASON TIPS**

**Going Away? Make sure the car you are travelling in is insured, registered and warranted.**

**If you are flying overseas register where you are travelling with [safetravel.govt.nz](http://safetravel.govt.nz) so you can be found in an emergency.**

**If you are travelling with mates all put some money in a kitty for petrol for the car.**

**Make sure you have sunscreen, wear a hat and keep well hydrated.**

**Look after your partners, mates and yourself!**

**PLANNING ON PLAYING OVERSEAS?**



**If you are planning on playing overseas you need to be cleared to play.**

**Here are two steps you need to follow.**

1. The player has to fill out an International Clearance Form which you get from your Provincial Union. You also need to get your Provincial Union to complete their part of the form. The Provincial Union then forwards the completed form to New Zealand Rugby [NZR].
2. New Zealand Rugby complete their part of the form and send to the host National Union who will usually forward this to the club you are going to.

**NOTE the Clearance person at New Zealand Rugby only works two afternoons a week 12.30-4.30pm so get that clearance done early! Any questions drop them a line at [clearances@nzrugby.co.nz](mailto:clearances@nzrugby.co.nz)**

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Every year our members honour their best and brightest in the annual Players' Choice awards. Here are the 2015 nominees:

## NEW ZEALAND RUGBY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

# NZRPA ANNUAL PLAYER AWARDS

### 2015 NZRPA Player Awards Players' Sevens Player of the Year nominees are:



Scott Curry



Sam Dickson



Joe Webber

### 2015 NZRPA Player Awards Womens' Player of the Year nominees are:



Kendra Cocksedge



Portia Woodman



Sarah Goss

### 2015 NZRPA Player Awards Players' Young Player of the Year nominees are:



Mitch Karpik



Akira Ioane

### 2015 NZRPA Player Awards Players' Provincial Union Player of the Year nominees are:



Brad Weber



George Moala



Vaea Fifita



Tevita Li



Tom Taylor



Luke Whitelock

### 2015 NZRPA Player Awards Players' Player of the Year nominees are:



Dan Carter



Sam Whitelock



Richie McCaw



Nehe Milner-Skudder



Ben Smith

# NZ WOMEN'S SEVEN'S

## SPORTING SPOTLIGHT – WORLD RUGBY WOMEN'S SEVENS PLAYER OF THE YEAR – PORTIA WOODMAN.

### Interesting Facts

- The 24-year-old Kaikohe born winger is a New Zealand Sevens player and World Sevens Champion, Black Fern and former Northern Mystics player.
- Portia is the highest scorer in New Zealand Rugby womens' history
- She averages 8-12 tries a tournament
- Portia was identified as part of the go for gold campaign in 2013 while playing netball for the Northern Mystics. [1100 Athletes were screened and she was one of the stand outs]
- Her Dad and Uncle played for the All Blacks in the 1980's and her Mum's side are also very talented in sports.

### What was it like winning the World Rugby Women's Sevens player of the Year Award

I didn't think I was going to win it, as the other finalists are both such consistent players. I was super ecstatic. I was super proud of the work that I had done and being recognised for it. I would like to thank Ngati Ranaga who loaned me the Korowai [cloak] that I wore



WORLD RUGBY WOMEN'S SEVENS PLAYER OF THE YEAR – PORTIA WOODMAN

at the event, it made me feel very special and very proud. I could hear everyone commenting about it as I walked on stage wearing the Korowai and all I was worried about was trying not fall over my broken shoes.

### What is the standout of your career so far?

Probably watching the progression of my game particular from Dubai Sevens in 2012 to this year. I hope that growth continues.

### What was your favourite Sevens tournament?

My favourite tournament was in China in 2013. I had come back

from injury and played the best tournament of my career. I got great feedback from the coach and felt really good. Our match against Aussie was probably my best personal performance for that tournament.

### What values are really important to you?

To me having that family connection, having discipline and having fun.

### What culturally is important to you?

I have been brought up in a proud Maori Culture which has given me a lot. Just because you can't speak Te Reo doesn't mean you can't embrace it and be proud – you can learn it on the way. I continue to learn about my culture and can hold conversations in Te Reo now and draw great strength from my Maori culture.

### What are you most looking forward to about Rio?

Just being in the same company as the world's best athletes. [I am definitely going to try and get a selfie with Usain Bolt!]

### Best bit of advice you can give athletes?

Nothing is impossible. It doesn't matter where you come from, you can make it if you want to.



ON CAMP AT ECOLIGHT STADIUM, PUKEKOHE



## WHAT WE ARE LISTENING TO...

six60, Rudimental, Megan trainor, Sid Diamond, Sammy J, Sorry - Justin Bieber, White lines - Six60 Reach for the stars - S Club 7, Zero - Chris Brown, Hot linebling - Drake 2pac



## WHAT WE ARE LOOKING AT ON FACEBOOK...

NZ Sevens, NZ Olympic Team, Food is Everything, Ronda Rousey, Women's Rugby NZ, Hair Braiding Spice Girls, Twirling, The Block



Now is the season of summer BBQ's so here are two super easy options so you don't arrive empty handed to the function.

## QUICK & SIMPLE PLATE IDEAS!

**Fruit Platter** If you are in a hurry, struggle in the kitchen or get a late call up to a BBQ, then this is for you!

**Time:** 5 minutes to prepare

**You will need:** Watermelon, Seedless grapes, Strawberries, Hershey's kisses. A plate to put it on (the \$2 shops have fun plates if you want to jazz it up).

**TIP:** don't have a plate too big as you will have to buy a heap of fruit!

**Method:** Wash the fruit. Put the strawberries on the plate and sprinkle the Hershey's Kisses over them. Add the grapes.

Cut the watermelon into wedges and then into fingers. Put on plate and you are DONE!



**Curried Eggs** Cheap and high in protein Curried Eggs are making a come-back! This is a dish that use to be popular in the 70's and 80's. They are coming back into food fashion and will be the first to go at any BBQ – come on you know you love them!

**Time:** 15 minutes

**You will need:** 9 eggs, 2-3 tablespoons low fat mayonnaise 2 teaspoons of dijonnaise mustard, curry powder to taste pepper to taste, parsley flakes to sprinkle on top

**Method:** Boil Eggs for 6 minutes **TIP:** Put hot water in a pot if you are in a hurry as it boils quicker. Run under cold water and sit in cold water to cool eggs. Take the shells off the eggs.

**TIP:** Gently put the egg on the bench and roll it with your hand over the whole egg to break the shell - the smash and roll technique makes it easier to peel but don't break the egg! Cut the eggs in half from top to bottom. Scoop out the egg yolk with a teaspoon and put into a bowl. In a bowl, use a fork to squash the cooked egg yolks and mix in the mayonnaise, dijonnaise, curry powder and pepper. Taste it to see if you are happy with the flavour. Scoop mixture with a teaspoon back into eggs [can be a bit fiddly]. Sprinkle over parsley flakes. Lay on any plate or put in a container and you are DONE!



## BEST GIFTS EVER!

We asked some of the New Zealand Women's Sevens team what were some of the best gifts they have ever received and here is what they had to say:

**Honey Hireme:** A box of scorched almonds and a lady transformer from my son **Niall Williams:** roller blades **Stacey Waaka:** A car **Morgan Morrow:** Spiceworld the movie - with pulp shoes **Hazel Tubic:** S Club 7 tape ohhhh bring it all back to me! **Shiray Tane:** A horse **Sarah Goss:** a long board **Alexis Tapsell:** a monkey teddy bear called Sammie **Tyla Nathan-Wong:** A gold necklace with a Chinese pendent from my grandparents. It has a special meaning to me. **Ruby Tui:** Time with family all together, very special especially when you fill your time up trying to chase all these dreams lol. **Charlotte Arnopp-Scanlan:** Home made photo board **Huriana Manual:** Trip to Japan **Portia Woodman:** Spending it with Whanau **Jordon Webber:** A nutribullet **Selica Winiata:** Having all her family together on the day

## AFFORDABLE GIFT IDEAS

Get organised and buy your Christmas gifts early.

**DO A BUDGET** – stick to you guns and only spend what you have allocated on each person.

A **photo** of you playing framed up for Mum!

A **personalized bag** with the name embroidered on it

**Books** – Obviously you have already got all the rugby player

books so check this

one out **The Good Doctor** – Lance O'Sullivan a truly inspirational kiwi story **Magazine**

**Subscriptions** – there is a magazine to suit everyone and it is a gift that keeps on giving all year round!

**Swing Ball Set** – this is the ultimate summer classic!

**Personalised vouchers** where you do something for someone else ie. mow the lawns, look

after kids, waterblast the house!

**Kids gift boxes** – Grab a box and fill it full of fun low cost items.

The kids love the experience of opening up the box and being surprised about the little treats inside.



# HUNTING DIARIES WITH WHOPPA



## FOR THE NEW ZEALAND HUNTER, THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME IS TO HEAD DOWN TO THE MIGHTY STEWART

### ISLAND AND HUNT THE ELUSIVE WHITE TAIL DEER.

REDS AND FALLOW DEER ARE THE MOST COMMONLY HUNTED SPECIES, BUT KIWIS ARE SPOILT FOR CHOICE WITH THE OPTION OF BEING ABLE TO HUNT WAPITI, SAMBAR, SIKA AND WHITE TAILS. THE WHITE TAIL ARE KNOWN AS THE WHITE GHOST OF THE BUSH BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY CRAFTY AND RARELY SEEN, A BIT LIKE ME IN A SUPER RUGBY CAMPAIGN.

In 2007 after Super Rugby, the biggest, loudest group of hunters ever to attack the Island made their presence felt.

We should have known this group was always going to amplify the challenge of chasing the white ghost.

The crew was myself, Carl Hayman, Charlie Hore, Craig Newby, Glen Horten, Tom Donnelly and the famous camp leader and experienced Stewart Island hunter Mike "DOC" Dougherty. We had 10 glorious days down at Port Adventure, which is a three hour boat trip from Bluff.

Our camp consisted of four tents and four tarpaulins set up for the area around the fire.

We had an amazing time, we ate like kings, dining on paua, crayfish, blue cod which we all caught off big Carl Haymen's boat that we had down there. Tom and Carl are top divers so we never missed out.

The deer count was a little low for the trip, with only a couple between the group. The first deer title went to big Carl Haymen as well. He shot it on the third night and we celebrated.

Ninety percent of white tails are shot within 100 meters of the beach, as they like to head down to the sand and graze on the kelp and eat the broad tree leaves. With this in mind we set up huts all around the beaches and laid traps with the broad leaves. My hunting partner was Glen 'Boogy' Horten. We fell asleep one morning and awoke to two deer running around the beach. Much to the boys' amusement we had

managed to bugger up the easiest chance of the trip.

Overall it was a cracking trip and I would recommend anybody who gets the chance to head down there and enjoy a magic bit of the country. On the last day of our 10 day trip, we were collecting firewood to leave at the camp and I spotted a long drop. I ran back to camp yelling excitedly to all the boys informing them of my find. They all look at me funny and cracked up - they had been using it the whole time. I was the only one heading deep into the bush with a shovel every bloody time!



**STONEY CREEK**

**Send a hunting or fishing photo and you could WIN \$250 worth of Stoney Creek gear of your choice!**

The good folk at Stoney Creek have given us a \$250 credit for someone to spend on any Stoney Creek merchandise of your choice. We know you like things simple, so send us your best high resolution [that means we can print it, so need to be 300kb in photo size] hunting or fishing photo to [kylie.sousa@nzrpa.co.nz](mailto:kylie.sousa@nzrpa.co.nz) and the best photo wins. Winner will be contacted by email to arrange your shopping trip and the picture published in the next magazine.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO BLADE THOMSON FROM TARANAKI AND HURRICANES WHO IS THIS MONTH'S WINNER OF THE \$250 STONEY CREEK SHOPPING TRIP**



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FOR THE GAME.